

A
SERMON
ABOUT
Frequent Communion,
Preached before the
UNIVERSITY
OF
OXFORD,
August the 17th. 1679.

*By Tho. Smith, D.D. and Fellow of St. Mary
Magdalen College, Oxon.*

L O N D O N,

Printed for *Samuel Smith*, at the *Prince's Arms* in
St. Paul's Church-yard. 1685.



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A

STRENGTH

OF THE

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OF THE

REVERENDISSIMO
in Christo Patri ac Domino,
D. G U L I E L M O,
Divinâ Providentiâ
Archiepiscopo *CANTUARIENSI*,
Totius Angliæ Primati & Metropolitano,
Serenissimæ Regiæ Majestati à Sanctioribus Consiliis:
Ecclesiæ CATHOLICÆ,
Primævæ Antiquitatis,
ECCLESIASTICÆ HIERARCHIÆ
Strenuo Vindici & Adsertori:
ECCLESIAE ANGLICANÆ,
Sub optimo & benignissimo REGE,
Prudentissimo Moderatori,
Magno Literatorum PATRONO.

T. S.

Hanc de frequenti Communione Concionem,
coram Academicis *Oxonienfibus* habitam,
humillimè & cum omni debita veneratione
offert.

REVUE GÉNÉRALE

in Christo Patri et Domino

D. G. U. P. M. O.

Dei in Christo Patri et Domino

Dei in Christo Patri et Domino

Dei in Christo Patri et Domino

Dei in Christo Patri et Domino

Dei in Christo Patri et Domino

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Dei in Christo Patri et Domino

Dei in Christo Patri et Domino

A
S E R M O N
A B O U T
F R E Q U E N T
C O M M U N I O N.

I Epistle to the *Corinthians*, ch. II. v. 26.

For as often as ye eat this Bread, and drink this Cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.

W^Hatever doth happen extraordinarily, and above the usual and established course of Nature, doth mightily affect our minds and fancies at first, and surprize and fill us with wonder; but as soon as we are grown a little familiar with it, our thoughts are at rest, and notwithstanding our former transports and heats, we quickly grow cool, and the impressions which it made upon us wear away by degrees, and we care not to make any farther reflexions upon it.

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And

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And the like is to be said of great and extraordinary Favours, in the moral state of things, as well as of extraordinary events in the natural; when they are first conferred, they draw our minds hugely after them; nothing doth or can insinuate it self more kindly into our affections. Greatness may make it self be feared and respected too; (for who will dare to affront armed Power, or chuse to be defective in those points of Ceremony and Honour, which are due to the person, oftentimes merely for the sake of his character?) But then there is a secret hatred mixed with that fear, and the respect is outward and forced, and if it be not, it is but the effect of a civil and prudent behaviour, and of a wise compliance. Whereas we are naturally inclined to applaud, to admire, to love such as have done any publick good, and especially if we have any share in it. Interest, and a particular concern for our selves, heighten our esteem and our affections, and our resentments hereupon become more pleasing and ravishing. But all this, for the most part, is but a fit of Passion, and a mere scene and representation of Fancy, arising from the present sense of the benefit; for the longer we enjoy it, we become less and less sensible. So forgetfull are we of every thing but our selves, whom we could be content onely to love and admire for ever. Whether this arises from an impatience of fixing our thoughts too long upon the same thing, or from the natural Pride which every man carries about him, as if the remembrance and acknowledgment of a favour were a tacit upbraiding us of our want, and of the infelicity of our former condition; yet so it is, and we need continually to be put in mind of our Devoirs and Obligations. It is but a piece of ordinary Justice, for instance, and what we cannot deny without the imputation

tation of Rudeness, as well as the guilt of Ingratitude, that such as have sacrificed their dearest Interests for their Country, as have out of an Heroick Principle of meriting of the Publick, exposed themselves to all the Misfortunes, and Hardships, and Adversities of humane life, and have redeemed the Lives of Thousands with the generous loss of their own, should have their Names mentioned with honour: they deserve at least, as a reward of all their labours and sufferings, that their memories be held dear and pretious by their surviving Friends and Country-men: this common gratitude obliges us to do; and especially if the benefit be perpetual, the remembrance of it should be perpetual also.

Now what greater benefit could possibly be done to the Sons of men, than the redemption of them from the slavery of Sin and Hell, and from the wrath and indignation of an offended *God*, by the Sufferings and Death of our blessed *Saviour*? This Victory he obtained for us, but not without much Sweat and Blood, whereby he has restored Liberty to the World, and put an end to the Usurpations and Tyranny of the Devil, who had enlarged his Conquest, and spread his Empire far and wide, and held the greatest part of Mankind in a dismal and miserable Bondage. This certainly deserves everlasting Acknowledgments, and an eternal Triumph. This ought to be continually and for ever fresh in our Memories. Who is not amazed at this new and strange way of Conquest, that *through death he should destroy him, who had the power of death*, that is, *the Devil*? Heb. 2. 14. that he should triumph over the evil Spirits in the Grave, the place where they used to erect their Trophies over the ruines of Mankind, and where the direfull effects of their Power, and Malice, and Revenge, were most seen.

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and lastly, that the end of his Life should be the beginning of his Glory and Exaltation? And then who is not equally, or rather, more amazed at the greatness of his Condescension and Love, that he should come down from his glory, and assume the nature of a Man, with all the natural Infirmities and Imperfections of it, undergo the Malice, and Slanders, and Fury of an enraged Multitude, who by their restless importunity got him sentenced to die as an Impostor and Malefactor, and submit to the Torments and Ignominies of the Cross, and endure with so great *patience the revilings and contradictions* of these impious and unrighteous Men, even while he hung upon the cursed Tree, which must needs add to the anguish and pain, which the violent extension of his Nerves caused in his tender Flesh; and all this for our sakes, who were the Enemies of *God*, and lost to all sense of goodness, and who deserved no pity? This was the effect of his tender Compassion and Love to Mankind; 'twas this that made him even relish that bitter Cup; and though as Man, he had just apprehensions of the Horrors of Death, and the Wrath and Justice of God, which he as our Surety, and as in our stead, was to undergo and satisfy; yet this alleviated his passion, and made him submit willingly to the hard condition of dying.

This indeed which he hath done and *suffered for us men, and for our Salvation*, cannot be forgotten without monstrous baseness and unpardonable ingratitude, and without making our selves unworthy of the blessed effects and consequences of his passion. And our Blessed *Saviour* himself would have the Memory of it perpetuated to all Ages and Generations; and to assist our Weakness, and sustain our Faith, which has need of such supports, and to make it impossible that it should
ever

ever be forgotten; He has instituted the blessed Sacrament of his Body and Bloud, as a perpetual and visible representation of it. He still presents himself before us, as hanging upon the Cross, his Body rent and torn with wounds, and his pretious Bloud gushing in a plentiful stream out of his side. Thus he is *evidently set forth before our eyes, crucified among us* still, (Gal. 3. 1.) as it were *in Effigie*. These memorials he has left us of himself till his second coming, to put us continually in mind, how much he suffered for us. This was the grand Reason of the Institution, the better to imprint it on our minds, that we might always have before our Eyes a lively Image and Figure of his Sufferings; the mysterious Rites used in the celebration being for this very end and purpose, and the whole Action solemn and fully significant. For *as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye shew the Lord's death till he come*.

I shall comprize the full sense of these words in these four following Propositions:

I. That the holy Elements, after Consecration, retain their own proper Essence and Nature, without any Physical and Substantial Change made of them. It is Bread that we eat, and Wine that we drink; but with a distinction and note of Dignity and Honour; it is *this Bread, and this Cup*, that is, of ordinary and common they become mystical and sacramental; they are altered and changed, as to their use, and effect, and condition; and not onely a divine Signification, but a divine Virtue is imprinted upon them.

II. That the blessed Sacrament of the Body and Bloud of our Lord doth very fitly and fully represent and set forth his death.

III. That

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III. That it is of perpetual Use and Observation, and to be continued till the end of the World; *ye shew forth the Lord's death till he come*, that is, till he come to judge the World at the last day, and to put an end to the present state of things.

IV. That all who profess their Belief in a crucified Saviour, and expect the saving benefits of his Passion, are obliged to a frequent celebration of this holy and tremendous Mystery; which is here plainly supposed, *as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup*. Which last Proposition I intend to make the Argument of my Discourse at this time. Now the Reason and Necessity of the Obligation will appear, if we consider these two things:

I. The End and Design of the Institution of the holy Sacrament.

II. The blessed Consequences and Effects of frequent Communion.

I. The End and Design of the holy Sacrament is, that it might be an everlasting Memorial of the Death and Passion of our Lord and Saviour. He was pleased after the Consecration of both Elements to add particularly and distinctly, not in the way of Advice, to be followed, if we think fit our selves, but in the way of a peremptory and absolute Command, *v. 24. This doe in remembrance of me*, and *v. 25. This doe ye, as often as ye drink it, in remembrance of me*. It is certain, that we ought to remember the Death of our Blessed Saviour at other times; as when we are upon our knees at our Prayers. *He gave himself for us an offe-*

offering and sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling savour, Ephes. 5. 2. by virtue of which, our Prayers wing'd with a lively Faith in his Blood, and with Zeal, ascend like a Cloud of Incense into the Holy of Holies, and find acceptance with God. We cannot employ our Thoughts and Meditations better, when we are upon our Beds, or when we are in private, and especially upon our Days of Fasting and Penitence, when God onely is witness to these spiritual Exercises. No Argument can make us more and better sensible of the defiling and damning nature of Sin, than the consideration of a crucified Saviour, that his Blood was shed on purpose to expiate and atone it. This will make us reflect upon our sins with a hearty sorrow and regret, which brought the Son of God to so sad and shamefull an end. How ought I to abhor and loath my self, when I consider that the sins which I have committed, though so many hundred years after, contributed to his dying, and make me an accessory of the guilt of the Jews, who were the cruel Instruments of his Murther? Nothing can more and better inflame our Zeal and Love to *God* and to *Christ*, than frequent Meditation on our *Saviour's* Death; that *God* should contrive this admirable way of our Redemption by the Death of his onely Son, whom he sent out of his own bosome on purpose to be a Sacrifice for Sin, and *whom he set forth to be a propitiation through faith in his blood, for the remission of sins that are past through the forbearance of God,* Rom. 3. 25. and that *Christ* should willingly undergo all this for our sakes. O blessed Saviour, how can we recompense this thy infinite Love towards saln Man! *Jesu God!* I cannot doe, I cannot suffer enough in the way of a just acknowledgment of thy inexpressible Kindness and Pity to my
poor

poor Soul, which thou hast redeemed from the nethermost Hell, and from the Wrath of God, which would have been the more intolerable. The reading also of the Narrative and History of our *Saviour's* Sufferings and Death, as they are recorded in the holy Gospels, together with a reflexion on the several circumstances

of them must needs leave deep impressions upon our memories. This tragical story wherewith the Heathen

(a) of old used to upbraid the Christians, as Votaries and Worshippers of a crucified God,

was so universally diffused throughout the World, that it was impossible that it should be forgotten; and the sight of a (b) Cross (which as soon as the *Roman* Empire turned Christian, became an Ensign and Trophy of Honour, every where to be met with,

(c) in their Banners, and upon their (d) Bucklers and Helmets, upon the Diadems of the Emperours, upon their Medals, upon their Churches and Spires of their Towers, and in their solemn Processions,) would quickly refresh their memories, and put them in mind of the great *Saviour* of the World, whose Hands and Feet were nailed to it, and

(a) Thus did the Emperor Trajan in his discourse with St. Ignatius, for that seems to be the meaning of his words, Sub Pontio Pilato crucifixum dicis: V. Aſa Martyrii S. Ignatii, Editionis Uſſeriana,

Simplicius, a Roman Judge of Tarſus, under Diocletian and Maximinian, to Bonifacius, Διὰ τὴν ἀδελφείαν, ἣν τὸς μόνον, ἡς ἀνθρώπων ἔχων τις ἐλπίδος, καὶ αὐτὸν σωραθῆντα ὡς κακῆρον; V. passionem S. Bonifacii ex Edit. E. Bigotii, p. 319. which seems to me to be a Translation out of the Latine, first published at Rome by Holstenius. Arnobius adv. Gentes; lib. 1. Cæcilius in Minucius Felix, hominem summo supplicio pro facinore puniuntur: nempe colunt. See also Lactantius divinar. Institut. lib. 4. cap. 16. Lucian, de morte Peregrini, Τὸν μὲν ἐκείνον ἐπὶ σέβαν ἀνθρώπων, τὸν ἐν τῇ Παλαιστίνῃ ἀνασκολοπιδῆτα — τὸν ἀνεσκολοπισμένον, ἐκείνον σαρξίνην αὐτῶν προσκυνῶν, as the Wretch blasphemed. The most usual reproach was, Deus vester patibulo affixus est; or, hominem colitis, hominem Palæstinum, crucifixum adoratis pro Deo.

(b) Thus Eusebius says of the Emperor Constantine, de vita ipsius, lib. 3. cap. 1. Ὁ δὲ ἐρ' ἢ μάλιστα εἰ ἀδοι τοῖς βλασφημίας ἐπέτεινον, ἐφεσπείον φυλακτίων, τῷ τῷ πάθους συμννομήνῳ προσέειπε. And in his Oration, de laudibus Constantini, Ὁ δὲ βασιλεὺς τὸ νικητικὸν ἔπαιμα σήμερον, ἔργον πῶν πέσαν τῆς ἐν αὐτῷ θεοφάνειας. cap. 9. p. 628. Ex Edit. Valesii.

(c) V. Euseb. de vita Constantini, lib. 1. c. 31.

(d) Cap. 21. Ἦσαν δὲ καὶ ἐπ' αὐτῶν τῶν ὅπλων τὰ τοῦ σωτῆρος προστάτα σύμβολον κατασκευαίνεσθαι ἐπέκει, τὸ ὃ ἐν ὅπλῳ εἶδεν προσημαίνειν — μέντοι τὸ σωτῆρος θεοφάνειον. S. Hieronymus ad Latam, Ep. 7. Vexilla militum crucis insignia sunt, Regum purpuras & ardentes diadematum gemmas patibuli salutaris pictura decorat.

and his Armes extended upon it, to receive and embrace all, who fly to him for refuge, from the assaults and pursuits of offended Justice. But Christ who knew the best and most effectual method to keep alive for ever the Memory of his Passion and Death, has ordained this holy Sacrament, as the most proper Instrument to make us truly and really sensible and mindfull of it.

It is not then a matter of mere indifference, whether we will receive the Sacrament or no: we cannot with any pretence or shew of Reason, take a liberty of dispensing with this Law of our Religion, as if it were wholly in our power to come and abstain as we please. For certainly all Laws were given with an intent that they may be observed and obeyed. If they oblige to a Duty, and require any thing to be done, the Omission is culpable, and is more or less aggravated, and admits of greater or lesser degrees of guilt, determinable by the variety of circumstances that attend it: and in this case especially when the Law-giver, to make our Obedience more ready and yielding, has been pleased to superadd to the expresse Declaration and Determination of his Will, Considerations of its agreeableness and reasonableness, as well to encourage as to command our Obedience, which he might otherwise justly claim as an Acknowledgment of our Dependence upon him. So that from what Principle soever our Non-performance proceeds, whether from Obstinacy and Pride, or from Carelessness and Neglect, we throw off and reject the Authority that imposed it, as if that did not oblige, or that we were not to be commanded.

Now *Christ* has commanded us to commemorate his Passion and Death, by participating the Symbols

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of

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of his holy Body and Bloud; and if we admit him to be our Lord as well as our Saviour, we can doe no other than obey; nor can we question his Power and Authority even in the more difficult Duties of taking up his Cross, of Self-denial and Mortification, or of sacrificing our Interests and our Lives in the propagating and defence of his Truth. For no difficulty in the thing to be performed can warrant or excuse the not doing of it, where the Obedience is necessary: and especially if we consider, that the End of the Institution of this holy Sacrament is highly agreeable to Reason; that the Sufferings of the Cross might never be forgotten, that our thoughts of it be not slight or transient, a cold reflexion upon it, as upon a sad and lamentable accident, the reading of which may trouble and move us a little, and incline us to pity or melancholy for a time, but that they be composed and serious, and often fixt upon the Object of a dying *Saviour*, who doth so well deserve them, and at last be raised up to a due pitch and height, to which this holy Solemnity is so conducing. For if it be our Duty, as most certainly it is, to meditate on the Death of *Christ*, to reflect, and that seriously, and with due intention of Mind, on the dolours of his Passion, if this be to be done often (for who can reflect too much or too often upon the effects of infinite Love and Condescension, the greatest that could possibly be shewn?) and if *Christ* has prescribed us a way how it may be done most effectually, that is, in the Sacrament, the consequence is easie, and just, and natural, that we are to communicate often; this being the most likely means to attain that end, the solemn commemoration of his Passion and Death. So that the design of the Institution makes frequent Communion necessary.

Now

Now that this was the mind of Christ, will appear demonstratively from the practice of the Apostles, who may be presumed to know and understand it best, and of their first Converts, of whom we read, *Acts 2. 42. they continued stedfastly*, *μετὰ συνέσταντες*, were very assiduous and diligent, in the *Apostles Doctrine and fellowship*, or rather, *κοινωνία*, communication, and so may refer either to their presents and gifts of Bread and Wine, and Fruits for the use of the Sacrament, and Love-Feast, which followed, or to the liberal distribution of the good things, with which God had blessed them, in a way of Charity and Benevolence, for the support and sustenance of the poorer sort of Christians: it follows, *and in breaking of bread and in prayers*, that is, in receiving the Sacrament, and in joint and publick Devotions. This was their constant practice, and it was universal too. For it takes in the whole number of Christians, which then began to encrease mightily, no less than Three Thousand having been converted to the Faith of Christ by Saint Peter's Sermon, *v. 41.* of all which this is expressly affirmed. So great was the Faith, and Piety, and Zeal of these new Converts, that they communicated every day. For Saint Luke is punctual in relating this material circumstance, *v. 46. And they continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house*, * *καὶ οἶκον*, in, or at the house where they used to make their resort, *did eat their meat with gladness and singleness of heart*: the meaning of which words seems to be plainly this, that as many of the *Christians* as could with convenience, met every day in a certain upper Chamber, adjoining to the Temple, or not far from it, and there celebrated the blessed Sacrament, and afterwards very chearfully and

* For that καὶ οἶκον is in the writings of the new Testament, sometimes the same with οἶκον, is fully and clearly proved by the excellent Dr. Hammond, in his Annot. on *Act. 1. 13.*

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heartily entertained one another with Feasts of Love and Charity: This upper room being the same with that in which our blessed Saviour eat the Passover with his Disciples, and instituted the Sacrament, afterwards called *The Oratory of Sion*, according to a tradition which passes current among the Christians of

Mark 14. 15.

Luke 22. 12.

* V. Eutychiei Patriarchæ Alexandrini Annales, part. 1. pag. 322. Josephum Ægyptium in codice Arabico Conciliorum titulo Canonum Apostolicorum, Librum Constitutionum Syriacorum Ecclesiæ Maroniticæ, à Davide Archiepiscopo ante sexcentos annos, Arabicè scriptum apud Abrahamum Ecchellensem, de Origine Nominis Papæ, p. 225. Romæ 40. 1660. Et Petrum D. D. Basilii & Gregorii fratrem, Episcopum Sebastien in opere Arabicè translato, quod inscribitur

الحس البرهان Liber Demon-

strationis, apud eundem p. 236. Sancti Jacobi Liturgiam, in 2. vol. Bibliothecæ Patr. editionis Parisiensis 2. vol. τὸ ὑπεράνω τὸ ἀγίον καὶ ἐν ὁσίοις Σιών, p. 15. Geographiam Nubiensem climate 3. parte 5. p. 113. Claudium Regem Æthiopiarum in confessione fidei, ab eruditissimo viro D. Ludolfo editâ, num. 4. Epiphanium de ponderibus, sect. 14. ubi de Hadriano Imperatore dicit, quod itinere suscepto sanitatis causâ, Ægyptum & Palæstinam petiit, Hierosolyma lustrandi cupidus, ubi nihil ferè relictum erat, παρεκτός τ' ἤδη ἐκκλησίας, μικρὸς ὄντος, ἐν δὲ ὑπερίφαντος οἱ μαθηταί, ὅτε ὁ σωτὴρ ἀνελήφθη διὰ τὸ Ἑλαιῶν ὄρος, ἀνέβησαν εἰς τὸ ὑπεράνω, τὸ ἕως, ἐν τῷ ἡγίῳ Σιών. Joannem Damascenum de fide orthodoxa, l. 4. c. 14. Joannis Phocæ ἐκφρασις ἐν συνόψει, &c. pag. 20.

† Mr. Gregory in his Observations upon some passages of Scripture, p. 9.

the * *East*. For that which is alleged by some, † that the former part of the verse may refer onely to their daily resort to the Temple at the hours of Prayer, that is, that they went and prayed in the mixt Assemblies of the *Jews*, for so they must be understood, if they speak consonantly to themselves; but that they brake bread from house to house, that is, at their particular homes, is of little force; because the words have an intimate connexion and dependence one upon another, and seem to contain the reason of their continuing daily with one accord in the Temple, which was to receive the Sacrament in a particular place in it, or near it: as καὶ ὁ οἶκος may very fitly be rendred. For if they render the words distributively from house to house, what hinders but that upon this supposition it may be inferred, that the Sacrament was celebrated in every Christian house of *Jerusalem* apart: which is against the undoubted

frequent Communion.

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doubted practice of those first Christians, who used to meet in great numbers * together, for this sacred purpose at a certain place, if it were wide and large enough to receive them.

But to let this pass only as a probability, that there was a constant weekly Communion, that is, every *Sunday*, is certain beyond all possibility of exception. *Act. 20. 1.* upon the *first day of the week when the disciples came together to break bread, Saint Paul preached unto them, &c.* This was at *St. Paul's* being at *Troas*, which was two or three and twenty years after the *Ascension*; variety of practice, as to these and the like circumstances, being allowed at different times, and in different places, and what they did here weekly, might formerly have been done daily by the Apostles and Disciples at *Jerusalem*. I do not urge their example, as if all Christians were obliged to follow it in these punctualities and circumstances, or as if we were guilty of a horrid neglect, if we do not receive the Sacrament daily, at least every Lords-day: but I only mention it as an instance of their piety and zeal, and of the great sense which they had of the obligation which lay upon them, of celebrating the Eucharist frequently from the command of Christ.

But this perchance might be the peculiar glory and excellency of those times, wherein devotion was at the highest pitch, and Christianity flourisht in its perfection and purity.

Let us therefore in the next place enquire into the practice and behaviour of their successors, and see whether they fell short of, or how nigh they came up to their example.

* *Ησαν πάντες ὁμοθυμαδὸν ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ. Act. 2. 1. πάντες ὅι οὐκ ἔδειξεν ἑαυτὸν ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ. Act. 2. 44. συνέχοντες ἐν ἑαυτοῖς ἐπὶ τῷ αὐτῷ. Cor. 11. 20.*

That

That the Christians had their private Meetings at night, and in the morning before the light appeared, that they might serve God and Christ, and perform all the solemnities of their Worship with less disturbance, could not but be taken notice of by their prying and idolatrous neighbours, among whom they lived, who envied them these happy opportunities; and the government was at last alarm'd with the number and frequency of these religious conventions: and the whole world then knew how they were reproached and abused for it by the opprobrious name of *latebrosa & lucifugax natio*: and what cursed slanders past upon them among the credulous Heathen, from the misunderstanding of their solemn receiving of the Sacrament at such times, and the Love-feast after: *dicimur sceleratissimi*, says *Tertullian* in the 7th chap. of his Apology, *de sacramento infanticidii & pabulo, inde & post convivium incesto*: which scandalous stories they diffused abroad with equal subtilty and malice, and enlarged upon with particular circumstances, that they might with the greater hope of success blacken the great credit and reputation of the Christian Religion, which it gained every where, and hinder its progress. But that this was the pure invention of the Devil and his Instruments, the Heathen Priests, their Temples being thin of Votaries, and their Altars reeking no longer with the blood of sacrifices, one of their writers, and a *Proconsul* in the *lesser Asia*, at least * a *Propraetor* with *Consular* power, in † a letter, which he sent to the Emperour *Trajan*, who would have been glad to have found these stories verified, doth fully prove. For he upon a diligent and severe enquiry (for to some, particularly to two Deaconesses, he gave the

* V. inscriptionem apud Onuphrium Pauvini-um in commentario in Fastos ad annum DCCCLIII.

† Epist. l. 10. ep. 57.

the question, and put them upon the rack, *quid esset veri & per tormenta quærere*, to know for certain, what their behaviour was in private) could onely make this discovery, that they met, *stato die*, on a set day, that is, undoubtedly on a *Sunday*, to sing an hymn to *Christ*, as to their God, that they then obliged themselves by Oath, that is, upon their solemn receiving of the Sacrament, to abstain from all sorts of dishonesty and baseness, and that they met again, and entertained one another with ordinary and innocent food; which is an irrefragable confutation of the *ἀνορθία* or devouring the raw flesh of an Infant imputed to them by their Enemies, which might in probability, partly, if not chiefly, arise from their gross and unnatural conception of the sacramental rites.

Indeed these were times of persecution and great danger and bloody decrees were oftentimes signed by the Emperors for their execution and slaughter. They were outlawed, and proscribed, and hunted after with violence, and drag'd before Tribunals, and in hourly danger of their lives. They saw that the profession of Christianity was made a capital crime, no less than Treason against the State; their Enemies out of an impious zeal for their Idolatry mad at them, inexorable, and void of all pity; their malice and their cruelty were insatiable and knew no bounds. They beheld what great waists the sword, the wheel, the cross and the flames had already made of their fellow-Christians, and, for ought they knew, their turn was next, and that they should have the honour, and be counted worthy, not onely to suffer reproach, but death for the name of *Christ*: They were so far from being wrought upon by fear to fly for it, that they seemed ambitious of dying, and willingly profered them-

themselves to the Heathen Judges. This did not discompose or distract their thoughts, but rather heightened their zeal and their devotion: every day was to them their dying day, because they had not the least moral assurance, that they should live to the end of it. Yet they were men still, though they seemed to act above the power of humane nature, and had need of a continual support to bear them up against so fierce and great opposition of men and devils. *They lookt up to Jesus the Author and finisher of their faith, who for the glory, that was set before him, endured the cross, and despised the shame.*

The contemplation of his death, and in the Sacrament especially, where it was so lively set forth, inspired them with more than humane courage. They received the Sacrament as often as they had opportunity, to fortifie their resolutions of dying for his name. They were fit for it every day, and therefore they might, and probably did, actually receive it every day, and so might we, if our affections were as pure and vigorous, and our lives as mortified and as holy.

Sometime indeed there was a suspension of these sanguinary rescripts, and several acts of grace were past in behalf of the poor *Christians*. The Emperors, notwithstanding those sudden fits and paroxysms of fury and madness, had their lucid intervals, and saw clearly, that it was against all laws of humanity and equity, and against reason of state, to depopulate the Empire of such usefull subjects, and to butcher and massacre such a vast number of men, whose onely fault was their religion.

During this uncertain state of things, the *Christians* relaxed nothing of their piety and ancient discipline; they went on in the same course, and followed the
foot-

footsteps of their Predecessors in the faith. *Nobis*, saith
* *Tertullian* in his Book *de Jeuniis*, *certè omnis dies*
etiam vulgatà consecratione celebratur. But when they
foresaw a storm of persecution arising, then the Bishops

* Contra Pſy-
chicos. cap. 14.

and the Christian people under
them had † daily Sacraments, and
at such times they abated the ri-
gour of the Church-Canons, and
admitted the lapsed persons to the
Communion, which otherwise was
not allowed them but *sub iclu mor-*

tis, as || *St. Cyprian* speaks, who
tells us, in that excellent Epistle to
Cornelius, of his daily offering up
this Sacrifice, and justifies his dea-
ling thus mercifully with his pe-
nitents, or rather triumphs and
glories in it. *Episcopatus nostri*
honor grandis & gloria est, pacem

dedisse martyribus, ut Sacerdotes, qui sacrificia Deo quo-
tidie celebramus, hostias Deo & victimas præparemus.

Nor did this zeal and devotion cool of a sudden, as
soon as the flames were extinguish't: devout persons
kept up the custome of receiving often in the flourishing
times of *Christianity*, when it was favoured and
cherished by the Civil power: and * *St. Basil* com-
mends daily communion as usefull and pious, and says
of himself, that he communicated four times a week,
and also upon the memorials of the Martyrs: Though
it must be most sadly confessed, that a general decay
of piety came in afterwards, and luxury eat out the vi-
tals of Religion, and these holy duties, which had been
the great comfort and desire of their souls in the day of
their afflictions, became to be neglected, and the plea-

† *S. Cyprian* Epist. 58. Edit. Oxon.
Plebi Thibari consistenti, milites Christi,
considerantes iccirco se quotidie calicem
sanguinis Christi bibere, ut possint ipsi
propter Christum sanguinem fundere.
p. 120. De oratione Dominica, Eucharis-
tiam quotidie ad cibum salutis accipere.
P. 147.

|| Epist. 54. Edit. Rigaltianæ quæ est
Epist. 57. Edit. Oxon. p. 118. He had
said before, p. 117. ut quos excitamus &
hortamur ad prælium non inermes & nu-
dos relinquamus, sed protectione sanguinis
& corporis Christi muniamus: & cum ad
hoc fiat Eucharistia, ut possit accipienti-
bus esse tutela, quos tutos esse contra ad-
versarium volumus, munimento Domini-
cæ sacrauitatis armemus.

* *S. Basil.* ad
Cæsariam Pa-
triciam, epist.
289. Καὶ τὸ κο-
ινώνειν ἢ καθ' ἡ-
μέραν τὰν ἡμέραν
ἢ μεταλαμβάνειν
τῷ αἵματι τοῦ
κυρίου καὶ τῷ
σώματι καὶ τῷ
πνεύματι.

tures and vanities of the World had dull'd their appetite, that they no longer relished this heavenly food, this *bread of Angels*, and if they came to the Sacrament, it was onely at the solemn times of the year, as at *Christmas* and *Easter* out of respect to the Law of the Church, and the custome of the place where they lived, that they might not be guilty of a scandalous omission of a duty so necessary, rather than out of a thirsty desire and longing after it.

But if we can have the patience to compare the forwardness and zeal of the first *Christians*, with the dullness and stupidity of this age, how ready and desirous they were to embrace all opportunities of commemorating the death of *Christ* according to his own institution and appointment, and how willing most of us are to decline them, and that upon very slight and oftentimes unreasonable pretences, if we dare compare their mortifications and severities in order to a due preparation, with our slight and perfunctory performances, how we are forced to doe that twice or thrice in a year, which they earnestly long'd for almost every day, it will make us tremble to consider, how much we are degenerated, and are fain short of those glorious examples which those ancient worthies set us, and how little of the power of *Christianity* is to be found at this time among *Christians*, notwithstanding all that great noise and profession which is made of it. Our Scholastical disputes and quarrels about the Sacrament have destroyed and swallowed up our devotion, and our charity; and that which was designed by *Christ* for an instrument of uniting mens minds together in Christian Communion and love, is now become an occasion of difference and irreconciliation. They were not troubled with those hot debates, which have since so miserably

rably distracted the Peace of *Christendom*: they contented themselves with a simple belief of the mystery, without busying their thoughts about nice and curious speculations: whole Churches were not then excommunicated for not assenting to a monstrous opinion contrary to common sense and reason, and the universal experience of Mankind; they did not, under a pretence of exalting the mystery, destroy the nature of a Sacrament, as now is done in the *Roman Church*. It must now no longer be a representative, but a real propitiatory sacrifice for the living, and for the dead, and Christ's natural body must be brought down from heaven upon a thousand Altars at once, and there really broken, and offered up again to God the Father, and his Blood actually spilt a thousand times every day, and mixing it self with ours. Nor did they on the other side degrade it into a bare empty sign, and entertain slight notions of it, or approach it without a due and becoming reverence, or abstain from it upon frivolous excuses, as the manner of some is. For had we that high value for the blessed Sacrament as we ought, did we believe it necessary to receive it often, not only *necessitate præcepti*, but *medii* too, did we believe seriously and consider, of what great use and benefit it would be to our Souls, we would be more diligent and conscientious in the use of it, and think our selves under an indispensable obligation of frequent Communion; which arises also from a consideration of the blessed effects and consequences of it; which is my second particular. And of these I shall name onely three.

I. By it we gain a close and intimate communion and conjunction with *Christ*; hereby *we are one with Christ, and Christ with us*; that is, upon our humble

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and penitent, and devout receiving of the Sacrament, he descends into our hearts by the sweet influences of his Grace; he is really present with us by his Spirit, and the *life, which we now live in the flesh, we live by the faith of the son of God, who loved us, and gave himself for us*, and still gives himself to us in these holy mysteries. For we must not sanse an immediate and personal union; he indeed was pleased by assuming the humane nature to unite the word to it, whereby he became God and Man; which wonderfull union is therefore called Hypostatical; because he had the two natures fully, with all their natural and essential qualities concurring in his own proper single person. But the union of Christ with the devout soul is purely spiritual; not an union of his personal excellencies and endowments, but a communication of his Grace and Spirit, whereby the soul is exalted above its natural capacity, and is transformed from glory to glory, and is made *partaker of the divine nature*, that is, filled with love and purity, and such God-like qualities. By this we are joyned and united to him, as *members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones*, that is, of his mystical body, the *Church*, as the Apostle explains himself, *Col. 1. 18.* and not of his natural body, on account of a incorporation, or assimulation, or conversion of the Sacrament into our bodily substance. Thus as the Apostle *St. John* speaks, *we have communion with the Father, and with his son Jesus Christ*. By virtue of *Christ's* pretious blood shed upon the cross, we are reconciled to God; he has entred into a new Covenant with us, which *Christ* has solemnly ratified by his death, and is willing to receive us to mercy and favour, upon the conditions of hearty sorrow for our sins, wherewith we have offended the eyes of his glory

ry, and of a holy life; and through faith in his Son we can put up our prayers to him with some assurance, that he will hear us, and communicate his favours and blessings to us, so far as he in his infinite wisdom sees fit, and give us of his Spirit: and the same communion we have with *Christ*; the soul is ravished with the contemplation of his infinite love and goodness to lost man, and to it self in particular, and is filled with astonishing reflexions of the merits of his death, as much as if he were personally present upon Earth again. This indeed is better understood than exprest, words being too scanty, and the imagination not able to reach and comprehend what the pious soul knows by experience. And if this be the blessed effect of our devotion and meditation; if when we are upon our knees, and are employed in holy thoughts, we then seem to be out of our bodies, and rapt into heaven, and there lie prostrate before the throne and the Lamb; how much more, when we are kneeling before the Altar, and are admitted to the participation of the body and blood of our *Saviour*, and are performing the most solemn part of the *Christian* worship, exerting with all possible vigour and intention of mind, (for so we ought to be affected) acts of holy love and zeal, and uniting our souls to *Christ* by faith. There is no need of fancying the bread to be substantially changed into the natural body of *Christ*, that so by this mean we may be really united to it, which is one of the colourable pretences made use of by *Petrus de Marca*, and others, for the Doctrine of Transubstantiation, and *Christ* naturally be and remain in us. It is enough, that *Christ* took our nature upon him, and united it inseparably to his divinity, that he was made up of flesh and blood, and a humane soul, and that he doth communicate himself, that is, his body

dy and bloud, in the Sacrament; for so the Elements really and truly are, after consecration, but without departing from their natural state, and without loosing their bodily substance. For this is all, I humbly conceive, that our Church means by the doctrine of the real Presence, which it acknowledgeth and maintaineth: that is, by the power of God, and the institution of our Saviour, and the descent and supervening grace of the Spirit, the elements of bread and wine, after consecration by a Priest, rightly ordained and constituted, become the body and bloud of Christ Mystically and Sacramentally: and so the Sacrament is more than a bare figure and representation, more than a mere Symbol or external rite, as were the types and shadows of the law: because it does exhibite and communicate Christ really and truly to us. Thus Saint Paul hath expressly determined, *the bread which we break, is it not the communication of the body of Christ? the cup of blessing, which we bless, is it not the communication of the bloud of Christ?* 2 Cor. 10. 16. Now were this seriously laid to heart, that in the Sacrament we meet with *Christ*, and receive him, how should we long for these blessed opportunities! *As the Hart panteth after the water-brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God; my soul thirsteth for God, for the living God, when shall I come to appear before God?* Can we be weary of his blessed presence, or complain of too frequent entertainments and communications? It will be the unspeakable glory and happiness of the other world, to be in the presence of *God*, and with *Christ* for ever. Here on earth he vouchsafes to be with us, in the Sacrament especially; here we may find him, whom our soul loveth: here we may embrace

brace him. Why then are we so unprepared? Why are we so backward? Why doe we this so seldom?

2. By a frequent participation of the body and bloud of our Saviour, we are more and more confirmed in our purposes of holy living, and strengthened in grace and goodness. We are daily exposed to a thousand temptations, by reason of the frailty of our nature, temperament of body, which has too too often a sad and fatal influence upon the mind, allurements of sense, and evil example, and the like. There is a continual strife between the dictates of right reason, which incite us to doe our duty, by arguments drawn from the obligations we owe to God, and the agreeableness of it to our nature, and the insinuations of appetite, which suggests a present pleasure, if we strain a little, and cease to be so scrupulous, till at last the directive and commanding faculties are impaired and captivated, and reason dethroned, and lust domineers in the soul, and the miserable person, who has lost his power over himself, is at the command of every extravagant passion. Which evil effects and consequences are prevented by a frequent and conscientious receiving of the blessed *Sacrament*. This being the true Physick of the soul, which not onely cleanses it from the defilements of sin, but fortifies it against all infection for the future. As often as we find any ill humour growing upon us, we endeavour carefully to prevent it. When we are sick, the tediousness and uneasiness which our distemper brings upon us, and the fear of death force us to seek out medicines to restore our health, and prolong our lives. The soul has its distempers, for the prevention

vention or removal of which, there cannot be a more sovereign remedy than the frequent devout receiving of the *Sacrament*. For there is such a divine efficacy in the holy *Sacrament*, and the blessing of God does so accompany this holy institution of our Religion, that, as a moral instrument, it conveys grace into the heart of the Communicant, if his approach be with due preparation and reverence, and if he does not wilfully and obstinately resist and hinder the kindly influences of it. If there went such a virtue out of *Christ's* natural body, when he was upon Earth, that great cures were wrought thereby: (*If I may but touch his garment*, said the woman, who had a bloody issue, *Math. 9. 21. I shall be whole.*) What a great blessing must the receiving of it in the *Sacrament* bring along with it, to the devout soul, that addresses to him with a lively faith, that he is able and willing to heal us? But we sin, after we have received the *Sacrament*, and we do not find these blessed effects of it within our selves: To which several things are to be replied.

1. That the *Sacrament* does not work physically and necessarily, but in the way of moral efficacy, to which we our selves must concur and contribute somewhat.

2. That these blessed effects are producible and visible in others, and have been in all ages; so that the fault is wholly our own, and no defect can be imputed to this mean and instrument of grace, why it is not equally effectual to us: And therefore,

3. That

3. That we did not either receive it with due preparation, that is, our hearts were not purified by repentance and faith, and inflamed with love and charity, but we might break in upon the Altar without awe and reverence, merely out of formality, in compliance with the custome of the place, and onely for fear that our absence should be censured; or else we are not carefull after we have received it, to perform those vows and obligations, which we laid upon our selves, when we were partakers of the Lords table; which is the general fault: we are seemingly strict before, as if this were enough, and could satisfy the Conscience to receive *Christ*, without any farther care of walking in him.

4. That this is as far from being an objection against frequent communion, as it is against our daily Prayer, for do we not, every morning privately on our knees, beg of *God* the assistance of his grace, that we may not be *led into temptation*, but may be powerfully defended from it, and preserved in it? and do we not as often, at least we should, publickly and in the congregation, beseech him, that he would vouchsafe to *keep us the remaining part of the day without sin*, and *defend us by his mighty power*, that we may not fall into it? But God knows our weakness, and we cannot but acknowledge it with shame and sorrow of heart, that the corruptions of our nature are oftentimes too strong for us, and baffle our purposes and resolutions. This drives us upon our knees again, and we pray God not to leave us to our selves, and by degrees we gain greater measures of strength, and in some sort get the mastery over the inclinations of corrupted

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rupted nature. This holds much more in the Sacrament, when we go to it with fresh desires, and more vigorous resolutions of living a holy and truly Christian life, and when we reflect upon our failings and miscarriages, since our last receiving, with deep humiliation and sorrow. *Thou, O Lord God, art full of compassion and mercy, long suffering, plenteous in goodness and truth, O turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; give thy strength unto thy servant, and help the son of thy hand-maid.* We need no invitations to satisfy the natural desires of the body, which is nourished and cherished, and oftentimes pampered by us. Nature has laid upon us a necessity of daily food, for the preservation of life, to repair those decays, which we daily suffer: without this, we consume and dye. Now if we believe the blessed Sacrament to be the food of the Soul, that we grow and are strengthened in grace by this bread of life, *the true spiritual manna, that comes down from heaven*, that is designed by God for this purpose, and conveys his blessing and sanctifying graces to all worthy receivers; that by virtue of this nourishment, we either retain or recover our vigour and healthfulness of mind, and that without it we languish and decay in the inward man, there would be no keeping us from this heavenly banquet at the Lord's table, where there can be no fear of a surfeit, where we eat and drink health and salvation, and where *Christ* himself is the entertainer, and the entertainment too. For *thou, O Christ*, as the *Greek Priest* prays in the Liturgy of *St. Chrysostome*, just before the *μεγάλη εὐχαριστία*, when they carry the gifts from the *Prothesis* to the Altar, where he consecrates, *σὺ εἶς προσέβουν, καὶ προσεβόμεν, καὶ προσδεχόμεν, καὶ διαδίδόμεν*, *thou offerest, and yet art offered up: thou receivedst*

receivedst the Elements into thy holy hands, and yet at the same time thy body and blood are distributed; thou, O Christ, makest this bread in the Sacrament to be thy flesh mystically, which thou still givest for the life of the World. Can we eat too much, or too often of this bread of life, whereby we are nourished to immortality, the holy Elements being the $\tau\acute{\alpha} \epsilon\rho\theta\iota\alpha \tau\tilde{\epsilon} \delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$, for so St. Clement in his former Epistle to the *Corinthians* must be understood, that is, not of the doctrine of our blessed Saviour; for that is mentioned in the following clause, $\pi\rho\sigma\epsilon\chi\omicron\upsilon\tau\epsilon\varsigma \tau\tilde{\epsilon}\varsigma \lambda\omicron\gamma\omicron\varsigma \alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\iota} \epsilon\pi\iota\mu\epsilon\lambda\omega\varsigma$, much less of the $\tau\acute{\alpha} \beta\iota\omega\tau\iota\kappa\acute{\alpha}$, or things pertaining to our bodily sustenance, and things of this life, as *Junius* thought fit to explain, but of the divine *viaticum* of the Sacrament, that we may not faint in the journey, which we are taking to the other world? $\tau\acute{\alpha} \epsilon\rho\theta\iota\alpha \tau\tilde{\epsilon} \Theta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$, that is, $\chi\rho\iota\varsigma$, for it immediately follows, $\tau\acute{\alpha} \pi\alpha\theta\eta\mu\alpha\tau\alpha \alpha\upsilon\tau\tilde{\iota}$, (to which there can be no other relative but $\delta\epsilon\tilde{\iota}\varsigma$) $\pi\rho\delta \epsilon\rho\theta\alpha\lambda\mu\tilde{\omega}\nu \delta\mu\omega\tilde{\omega}\nu$, (which expresses testimony of this Apostolical writer for the Divinity of our blessed Saviour, I could not but observe by the bye, to help to confound the arrogance and blasphemy of that profest Arian, *Sandius*) so that these words seem clearly to relate to the Sacrament, where the sufferings of Christ are so lively represented to our sight.

3. By frequent receiving of the Sacrament we are more and more made partakers of the benefits, and blessings, and merits of *Christ's* holy passion and death. It is the great artifice of the *Roman* Church to keep up the credit of their private Masses, to which antiquity is a mere stranger, to make the people believe, that the Priest hath a power of applying the efficacy and merit of *Christ's* sacrifice to their particular benefit, for

whom he intends it; so they contribute somewhat in the way of charity or gift, and are but present in the time of the celebration. But 'tis certain, that before superstition, and corruption of Doctrine had overspread that Church, and before they had perverted this most solemn part of the *Christian* worship into a mere piece of pageantry and theatrical shew, all that was anciently designed by the mentioning the names of the living, to say nothing at present of the commemoration of the dead, at that time, as is clear from the Canon of the Mass still in use, was onely by way of intercession, that *God* would be pleased, for the merits of his Son's death, which they were then commemorating, to have mercy on them, to forgive them their sins, and to pour down of his grace abundantly upon them, and not onely upon them, but upon the whole number of *Christian* people throughout the world.

But this cannot yield such peace and quiet, and satisfaction to my conscience, as my own particular application of the merits of *Christ's* sufferings to my self; what another does for me, cannot be my act, when I am obliged to do it in my own person, and not by my representative. I am to eat his flesh in the Sacrament, and drink his blood, if I would live in him; and by him. Now *Christ* by his death hath satisfied the divine Justice, and reconciled us to the Father, who no longer imputes our sins to our charge and condemnation: the blood, that he spilt upon the cross, is the seal of an everlasting covenant; *for this cause he is the mediator of a new covenant, that by means of death, for the redemption of the transgressions, that were under the first covenant, they which were called, might receive the promise of an everlasting inheritance.* Heb. 9. 15. So that now heaven and salvation are made over by God, by
virtue

virtue of this expiatory Sacrifice, to all that truly believe in his Son's name. This Sacrifice was made once for all upon the Altar of the Cross; but the merit reaches backward to the first being and original of things, and looks forward to the end of the world, and to eternal ages. It is, as to the fruit and efficacy of it, as present to God, as if *Christ* were born every day into the world again, and really every day offered up, or as if it were but yesterday, or but just now offered; it being all-sufficient, and of infinite value, and fully accepted by God, as a just price and ransom. Now that he suffered this bitter and cursed death upon the cross for me, and that I may apply all the saving benefits of his passion to my self, he assures me by giving me his body and blood. Every time we receive the Sacrament worthily, there is a new confirmation of our pardon; *the spirit of God beareth witness with our spirit, that we are his children*, and reinstated in his grace and favour. 'Tis an infallible pledge of our immortality, and that he will raise us up at the last day, as much as if his natural flesh and blood were eaten and drunk by us, and converted after the ordinary way of digestion, into our bodily substance. We have this assurance in his holy word, but much more in the holy Sacrament, because here is a more lively, sensible and particular representation of it; that is, though I acknowledge and believe this to be one of the fundamental truths of the Gospel, that *Christ* died for our sins, that he appeared once in the days of his flesh, to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself, and that at his ascension he entered in his humane nature into the holy place, having obtained eternal redemption for us; my faith grows stronger yet, when I receive the sacred symbols into my hands, and convey them to my mouth. For then if I come with
a due

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a due preparation, it is, as if I received from *Christ* himself, and as if he still pronounced the same words to me, as he did to the Apostles at the institution. Now can we have too great, too full an assurance of the favour of *God*, of the pardon of our sins, of our living for ever in the presence of *God* in the other world! *God* knows, we forfeit our hopes by our gross and scandalous relapses: we lose the favour of *God* by our presumptuous disobedience; we miss the sight of heaven by reason of the thick mists of our sins: our onely comfort and support is, that *God* upon our hearty repentance and amendment will be reconciled to us. Here it is, that we may recover our selves, that *God* restores us to the joy of his salvation, and upholds us with his free Spirit. Here it is, that the weary and heavy laden with the burthen of their sins may find rest and peace to their souls. Here it is, that *Christ* not onely commands, but invites us to come; and how can we but accept of such an invitation? so that were the thing wholly arbitrary and indifferent, yet the benefit and advantage is so great, that this should prevail with us to come, and to come often.

To draw to a conclusion, with particular reference to this reverend and learned Audience. If this obligation lies upon all in general, how much more upon us, who have the honour to wait at the Altar, and administer in holy things, and upon You, who are designed to the same honour? This was the pious intent of our munificent and glorious Founders and Benefactors, in erecting and endowing these structures, which are the envy and admiration of all foreigners, and in providing so liberally for us several ages before we were born; that being here trained up in severe exercises of piety, and in the studies of sound and usefull learning, we may the better be fitted to do *God* service in the
Church

Church, defend the truth of our religion against all its subtle and malicious opposers, keep up the belief and practice of *Christianity* in the minds and lives of the people, be a credit to the Countrey and Age we live in, and approve our selves not unworthy of the bounty and maintenance which we so happily enjoy. Both God and man expect it from us, that we especially should shew forth an exemplary piety, to which nothing can conduce more, than a frequent and devout receiving of the Sacrament. This would take off our minds from idleness and vanity, and confine us more to our selves, and our studies, and make us reflect on the true end of living in a College, and the particular duty of the Priestly function. This would confound all the scandalous imputations cast upon the Universities of late by Mr. *Hobbs*, and his Atheistical Gallants, by the Papists and Fanaticks in their scurrilous libels and Pamphlets, who make it their business to bring a discredit and a disreputation upon us. We cannot but be sadly sensible of the great contempt that is poured out upon Church-men; and we justly esteem it, as we have highest reason so to do, an infallible mark and proof of the Atheism, of the irreligion, of the debauchery of the age. But are we not too too much wanting to our selves? would we retrieve and recover the honour due unto the Priesthood, which seems in a manner forfeited at present? there cannot be a better or more effectual expedient, than this, than to make others sensible by our example of this great duty of our Religion, and of the necessity first, and then of the blessed effects and benefits of frequent communion. Such an exemplary strictness would help to re-establish and bring back the true *Christian* temper and spirit, which are almost lost and shut out of the world.

I will

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I will not take upon me to prescribe precisely, how often the blessed Sacrament is to be received. Every one is best able to resolve himself in this case. The Church of *England* out of the great care, which she has of the souls of all such, as live within her communion, does oblige them to communicate three times at least in the year, of which *Easter* to be one; and this I find expressly determined in a * Council held at *Agatha*, a City in the south of *France*, under *Casarius*, Archbishop of *Arles*, in the year of Christ 506, with this farther addition, that they who did not comply with this Canon, should not be reputed Christians. But this limitation respected secular persons onely, and he is not generously pious, that does but just come up to the bare letter of the Law, which forbids, that it should be longer neglected, but is supposed to encourage the willing to more frequent approaches. But we are under higher and more indispensable obligations. The Persons concerned in the late disturbances, and who by their furious preachments helpt to pull down the Hierarchy of the Church, cannot but reflect, one would think, with shame and horror enough, upon the sad effects of their pretended Reformation: how the giddy people, whom they had infatuated, were broken into many factions and sects, and lost their reason and their religion, and grew enthusiastical and mad. It is but a sorry excuse to say, that the hand of the Jesuite was in all this: for they by their unreasonable schism, and discontent, and factious conventicling, though coloured over with pretensions of godly zeal against the Papists, as at this day, wherein they are playing over the same game, had created unjust prejudices in their minds; had shaken them in their judgments from the established doctrine and service of the Church, and had fitted them to be wrought upon

* Canon 18. Seculares, qui Natale Domini, Pascha & Pentecosten non communicaverint, Catholici non credantur, nec inter Catholicos habeantur.

upon by their subtle artifices, and insinuations. What a sensible decay was there of true Christian piety and devotion! the blessed Sacrament being seldom administered. Those Intruders, who called themselves the University of *Oxon.* from the bloody and fatal year of 1648, to the King's happy restoration, did not think fit so much as once to celebrate the communion together in this Church, and a publick Sacrament was not seen in several College Chapels during the same space of time. This was the holy discipline of those times: and indeed men of such divided hearts and interests, having once separated from the Church, soon grew weary of one another's company: pride, and conceit-
edness, and passion, had embittered their Spirits; and they would not communicate but in private chambers, and with their own beloved party, refusing to make use of the publick places of worship, which they had usurpt, and were then possessed of. How much does it concern us to have a better and greater esteem of these venerable and holy mysteries, and accordingly how ought we to take care, that our approaches be frequent, and that we make all due and necessary preparation! otherwise *we eat and drink damnation, not considering the Lord's body.* If we believe, that we ought not to come to the Sacrament without due preparation, why do we not prepare our selves? why are we not in a continued readiness? If we do at any time forbear, let it not proceed from supine negligence, or slighting; or from a false and deceitfull colour and pretension of our unworthiness, but out of reverence and humility, and that we may come with greater measures and degrees of repentance and devotion. For where there is an heart inflamed with the love of God and Christ, where there is purity and in-

A Sermon about frequent Communion.

nocence of life, where there is a zeal to promote the glory of God, and the good of others, where there is a hearty sorrow for sins past, and a serious resolution and endeavour of pleasing God for the time to come, by an entire obedience to his commands, and where there is not the least indulgence or continuance in any known sin; where there are these qualifications, there cannot be any just scruple. I shall conclude therefore with that excellent and well known advice of * *St. Ambrose, Accipe quotidie, quod quotidie tibi proſit: ſic vive, ut quotidie merearis accipere.* Receive daily, that which will be of daily, nay of everlaſting uſe and benefit to us: at leaſt, let us ſo live, that we may be fit to receive every day, that ſo having here on earth communion with our bleſſed Saviour in the holy Sacrament by faith, we may hereafter be admitted to an everlaſting communion with him in perſon in the higheſt heavens. *Amen.*

* De Sacramen-
tis, lib. 5. cap. 4.

F I N I S.
